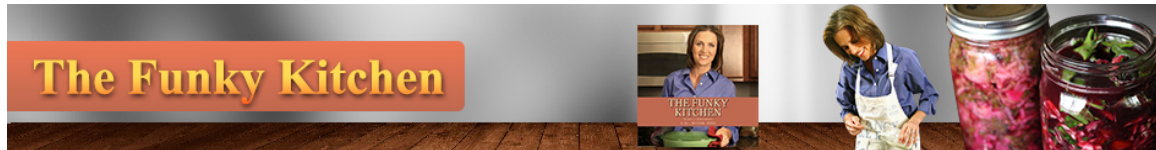


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9 Excellent Things to Do for Your Health

by Sarica Cernohous

1. Reduce Your Sugar and Carbohydrate Intake

In the late 1800's, Americans consumed the added sugar equivalent of a can of cola every 5 days. Today, that number is reached EVERY 7 HOURS.) There is simply no way our pancreas, liver and cell membranes can keep up with this deluge, and modern day illnesses such as Type II diabetes, cancer and other degenerative diseases have skyrocketed as a result.

Action Item: Opt for more vegetables, such as fresh and sautéed greens, summer and winter squashes, sweet potatoes rather than grain-based items. Reduce your sugar intake by using an all-natural sugar replacement such as stevia, or simply use (a lot!) less sugar—and that includes honey, molasses and natural sugars. Fruits are sugars, too—so increase your veggies, but decrease your fruits if you find that “produce” tends to mean fruits, fruit preserves and fruit juices in your diet.

2. Reduce the Amount of Processed Oils in Your Diet

The explosion in the use of polyunsaturated fats has also contributed to the increase in degenerative diseases in our country. By their very nature, polyunsaturated, man-made fats are higher in inflammation-provoking omega-6 fatty acids, and these items (safflower, rapeseed – the source of canola oil, cottonseeds, soybeans and corn, arrive on the shelf heat- and pressure-damaged, generating a rancidity that is covered up by deodorization in the final stages of manufacturing.

Action Item: Use extra virgin olive oil to make your own salad dressings, and use unrefined coconut oil or palm oil for cooking and baking. Clarified butter is excellent for sautéing and baking, too. Remember—if you squeeze the original food from which an oil is derived and your fingers feel oily, then it's likely a much healthier oil to use (walnut, olive oil, sesame oil.) Just keep these kinds of oils refrigerated and out of light to safeguard from rancidity.

Absolutely avoid any foods made with hydrogenated oils—these oils are incredibly damaging to our cells' integrity. Much better to use the healthy saturated fats of butter, coconut oil, virgin palm oil and pastured animal fats; the wonderful monounsaturated/saturated balance found in extra virgin olive oil is another excellent oil to consume.

3. Learn How to Cook and “Eat In” More Often

If you want any control over the ingredients in your meals, then you have to take control and make them yourself. Even the finest restaurants have the bottom line in mind when running their kitchens, meaning that if there can be corners cut on the cost of ingredients, those corners will be cut—and you'll be left holding the bag nutritionally. Obesity is linked to the frequency that one eats out.

Action Item: Try bringing your lunch to work 2 or 3 times a week and use leftovers from last-night's homemade dinner to make creating your lunch simple and nutritious. Crockpots, set first thing in the morning before leaving for work, are the original fast food! Come home after a long day and pair the pot's hot dish with a fresh salad and a small serving of fruit for dessert.

4. Supplement Your Nutrition

Even the best efforts to improve our nutrition can be a challenge—food today is simply not as nutritious as the foods of our grandparents. Over-farming, the continued use of pesticides, foods being picked before peak ripeness and held in cold-storage in the produce warehouse, shelf-stabilization of prepared foods with hydrogenated oils—there are many ways our food system has created quantity at the expense of quality. Therefore, quality nutritional supplements from whole-food sources are a good idea.

Action Item: Consider whole-food sources of vitamins such as D, K2 and C, as well as other whole food supplements like fermented cod liver oil, krill oil, or fermented skate liver oil for the concentrated nutrition they offer. Speak with your healthcare provider about which supplements they think you could most benefit from.

5. Make Your Exercise Count *for* You, Not Against You

Research shows that we are much better off if we do short bursts of activity, for short duration and not necessarily daily. If we consider our ancestors, they didn't spend all day at the gym or running marathons—no, their days were spent with short blasts of activity (hunting or being chased), followed by moderate activity of food procurement and preparation, shelter repair, etc., and plenty of leisure. Our bodies operate best when we have bursts of activity with a little moderate cardio exercise. This type of exercise gives us a boost in HGH (Human Growth Hormone) and testosterone, which studies have shown to last for an average of 36 hours!

Action Item: Go online and look at different options for interval training. It can be as simple as jumping rope or swimming laps or dancing (hard!) in place, for about 90 seconds. Then slow your activity down until your breathing and heart rate return to

normal, then burst again for another 90 seconds. Repeat for a total of 5 to 6 bursts, every other day. And always check with your doctor before beginning any exercise regimen!

6. Handle Your Stress and Find Balance in Your Life

The AMA reports that 85% of hospital admissions are stress-related...so, clearly, most of us are not handling our stress very well. Making sure you are taking care of yourself in the ways you can (such as what has been suggested in this writing!) is an excellent hedge against falling apart when life throws you curve balls. Adequate sleep, solid nutrition and moving your body are all great ways to control a degree of your reaction to stresses—use them!

Action Item: If you find that stress is getting the best of you in spite of your best efforts, consider prayer, Emotional Freedom Technique, acupuncture, or meditation... There are many supports available to help keep you feeling grounded and more peaceful. Explore them!

7. Pace Your Meals

One way many people attempt to lose weight is by skipping meals - but our DNA is smarter than we are. Biologically, we are hard-wired to respond to periods of famine by holding onto the foods we eat in our fatty tissues, for use at a later time. If you want to lose weight, don't skip meals. Not eating causes a decline in brain function, stresses our adrenal system and puts us on a blood sugar roller coaster.

Action Item: Plan to eat 3 meals a day. If you find that you get shaky, moody or weak between meals, then you might consider adding a little more protein and healthy fats to your meals.

8. Create a Healthy Sleep Pattern

It is estimated that our bodies heal 7 times more effectively when we sleep—it is crucial to our well-being on many levels (just ask any new parent if you have questions!) It really is ideal to have 7-8 hours of uninterrupted sleep a night, though many are getting far less. And studies have shown that people who lack adequate sleep have much greater carb cravings throughout the day and eat more calories—their body is simply looking for a quick energy source to supplement the lack of true energy that comes following a good night's sleep.

Action Item: Make certain you have good sleep hygiene: No TV or computer within an hour of sleeping. Dim the lights and create a quiet space for your mind to settle. Finish your last meal at least 2 hours before bed, and any liquids at least an hour before. No caffeine and very little alcohol in the evening. Keep the room dark and cool and make sure your bed is comfortable, the room quiet, or humming with a gentle white noise.

9. Eat Organically as Often as Possible and Keep Your Foods Simple

You may have heard the suggestion to shop the perimeter of the grocery store—where the produce, meats, dairy and bulk bins are found. This is a very good start since most anything found in the inner aisles is highly processed, made with processed and rancid oils, contains artificial colors/flavors/sweeteners, preservatives, and chemically-derived vitamin “fortification.” There’s not a whole lot of nutritional value when you take a moment to examine what is actually in these items.

Action Item: Go a week without shopping the interior of the store and use instead all the *REAL, whole foods that are on the perimeter in various recipes throughout the week. Make soups, fresh salads, sauté vegetables and meat, and use your crockpot. Also, shop your local farmers markets and get to know the farmers and learn what is growing locally and seasonally in your area.

*REAL foods consist of meats and full-fat dairy from pastured animals (NOT corn-fed, feedlot-raised livestock), eggs from scratch hens, produce from farms using organic methods, whole grains, nuts, seeds and legumes from organic fields. If you do buy processed foods, read the labels and just make certain the ingredients are from real, identifiable foods.



Sarica Cernohous is a licensed acupuncturist, nationally-certified herbalist and practitioner of Traditional Chinese Medicine. She is the author of *[The Funky Kitchen: One Soccer Mom's Favorite Traditional Food Techniques and Recipes](#)* (available on Amazon.com) and hosts her blog, www.naturallylivingtoday.com, a place to share ideas on living more naturally in the modern world. She teaches and counsels on various aspects of whole food nutrition, both live, and through her online program, “Fresh, Fun and Flavorful in The Funky Kitchen” (www.funkykitchenfresh.com). She is a member of the National Association of Nutrition Professionals, a chapter leader for The Weston A. Price Foundation. She lives in northern Arizona with her husband and two children. You can reach her at sarica@naturallylivingtoday.com.